THE UINTAH RESERVATION

More than half a century has gone to make up the records of the past since the Uintah valley first came into prominence. An official order was issued July 31, 1851, by Brigham Young, Governor of Utah Territory and ex-officio superintendent of Indian affairs, establishing three Indian reservations for the Territory. They were the Uintah valley, the Pauvan and the Parowan. Stephen R. Rose, a sub-agent, was assigned to the Uintah, and several Ute tribes were ordered to move thereto and make it their home. The boundaries of the reservation were not then definitely defined, and there was little need of restriction, for the white man was not then disputing the right of possession in that remote region.

Best in Utah Given Up.

The lands of the beautiful Salt Lake valley and of the fertile valleys south of Utah lake were being appropriated by Mormons, and the Indians were reluctant to obey this order to move and to surrender their homes and lands to their usurpers.

The rich, unlimited range must be given up, the cultivated patches, the graves of their dead, the camping places and familiar hunting grounds, the very best the Utes had been able to find in all Utah, must be relinquished to satisfy the greed of the white man. Some of the Uintah Utes and a few of other tribes assigned to the Uintah valley complied with the order, but other contested the field with the Mormons and reckoned an Indian farm to be worth a Mormon cow, and the Indian got the cow; or a township of land to be worth a small herd, and the Indians tried to get the herd.

The files of the Valley Tan and the Deseret News of those early times would show how the kindness of the settlers failed to palliate the grief of the Utes at the slaughter of game created expressly for the Indian, as he thought, and at banishment from the valleys to live in the snows of the mountains and subsist on buds and pinon nuts.

Napoleon of the Desert.

The "Napoleon of the desert" in those days was Walker, chief of the Utes, and he contested for supremacy until all hope died in his breast. He was not only a terror to white people, but to the weaker tribes of his own race, whose children he is said to have captured and traded to Mexicans for horses. These children were carried to Mexico and California and sold to become home servants in the homes of the people.

How hard was the task of the chiefs and headmen to hold the Utes at Uintah may be imagined from a message sent by Chief Tabby: "Tabby sends word to all the bishops that he can control his men no longer."

Uintah Agency Permanent.

The first official act of the Government relating to the Uintah reservation was of date October 3, 1861, when it was set aside by Executive order, which order was approved by act of Congress May 5, 1864. There was, however, no permanent residence established by the Utes on the reservation until after a treaty made at Spanish Fork reservation farm in 1865. It was the intention at this time to place all the Utah Indians on the Uintah, but up until 1869 there were but 1500 of them there, out of a population of 15,000 in the Territory.

By the terms of the treaty they were to relinquish title to lands previously occupied, move to and settle permanently on the new reservation within a year, cultivate crops and send their children to school. Appropriations had been made to pay the chiefs annuities, and the tribes $25,000 annually for the first ten years; $20,000 annually for the next twenty years, and $15,000 annually for thirty years thereafter.

Tabby Takes Homestead.

The Uintahs were more given to agriculture than other Utes; were less migratory and better disposed, and would most likely have kept the pledge if the money had come as expected. But there was a lack of compliance on the part of the Government and of the other Indians, and the Uintahs got hungry and discouraged, and Chief Tabby himself later became totally disheartened and skipped back to Skull valley and filed on a homestead of 160 acres, had it fenced and farmed, proved it up and got his patent.

But since then Tabby and the Uintah reservation have been inseparable. He was a man of peace; a chief beloved, who bequeathed an inheritance of good conduct, and whose memory is cherished by all his people. If Tabby's tomahawk was ever raised against his fellow-man it must have been under greatest provocation or in obedience to a superior chief.

He is no less a hero who stands like a Gibraltar among his people, unmoved by threat or entreaty, and stays the hand from blood and saves the home from sorrow and desolation.

Peace has her stalwarts who hold in steady poise the fiery rage of offended dignity till cooled by softened counsel.

Such a hero and such a stalwart was Tabby.

The Indians on the reservation had evidently received very little encouragement, the agent preferring to live at a safe distance from the Utes, hence there was little show of improvement about the agency, which was first located on the Duchesne at an altitude too high for the growth of crops. In 1868 a new agency was selected seventy miles east and on the Uintah river at White Rocks, and here the Utes took a new start and raised 1000 bushels of wheat in 1869; 1500 bushels of potatoes; 900 of corn; 400 of oats, besides a good supply of garden vegetables.

Critchlow Agent 13 Years.

J. J. Critchlow was appointed agent in 1870, and took up his residence on the reservation in 1871, and began systematic dealings with the 800 Indians who then belonged there. During his long term of thirteen years he is profuse in his praise of the Utes, and commends them for loyalty to him and the Government, and for patience and composure under the most trying circumstances. At this time the base of supplies was Salt Lake City, 200 miles distant, and the road intolerably bad, and open but four months in the year. Living was precarious, but when supplies ran short the Indians hunted more buckskin, appealed to Brigham for more blankets, and pieced out a mere existence, continually hoping that Washington would not always be so poor.

Indians Good Mormons.

In the early days the Mormons tried to placate the Indians and keep down trouble, and at one time more than half the Utes at White Rocks agency were members of their church. This church believed it had a special mission to the Indians, whom it calls Lamanites and claims are descended from the ancient Jews. The Utes did not dispute the mission at first, for they discovered the more baptisms among them, the more blankets; besides, they did not object to plural wives up to about three, and could indorse any tenet of their faith that did not trench on their own superstitions. They attended church at the agency, observed "Shinnob Day," were industrious in fencing and farming, and gave promise of constant advancement.

A $70,000 Massacre.

But a disturbing element came among them after the Meeker massacre of 1879, when 400 White Rivers were brought from Colorado and put in with the peaceable Uintahs. The White Rivers had been found guilty of the brutal murder of Agent Meeker and others, and the penalty inflicted was removal from Colorado and the payment of $70,000 out of their funds to the families bereft by the massacre. These Indians came over in 1882 and drew the brakes on the general trend upward, for they were opposed to agriculture and schools and all civilized agencies, and for several years resisted the peremptory demands of the agents to work and send their children to school.

Schools and Witchcraft.

Compulsory education is the most unpopular innovation at the agency, worse even than "hair cutting," and if children take sick at school and die there is trouble. An epidemic of measles broke out at the White Rocks school a few years since, and Indian parents were intent on taking their children home, but were forbidden. Finally, Black Hawk broke through the guards and got to his children, threw the agency physician over the bed, the industrial teacher down stairs and carried his children out.

In savage life no punishment is too severe for witchcraft, and the Ute word for schoolhouse means a house where witchcraft is learned.

Indians Wronged in a Trade.

The other Indians removed to Utah from the Colorado reservation were the Uncompahgres, and they were assigned to a reservation lying between the Colorado line and Green river. This body of land of nearly 2,000,000 acres is virtually worthless to the Indians for agriculture, for the limited area of farming land is impossible of irrigation except at great cost, and as this tribe had been especially tractable and deserving, and more intelligent than others, there was a disposition to do something to relieve them. Accordingly the matter was taken up in Congress and a bill approved August 15, 1894, for allotting to them lands on either the Uncompahgre or the Uintah reservation, or elsewhere in Utah. Each head of a family was to receive one quarter section each of agricultural land; each single person and child one-eighth section each; the Indians to pay $1.25 per acre out of funds in the U. S. treasury arising from the sale of the Colorado lands.

An appropriation was made for the purpose, and a commission appointed and instructed to report, also what portion of the reservation was unsuitable or not required for allotment, and to negotiate with the Indians residing on the Uintah reservation for the relinquishment of all lands not needed for allotment to their own people.

This allotting commission was appointed November 28, 1894, under the incumbency of Hon. Hoke Smith, Secretary of the Interior, and consisted of S. S. Scott, Uchee, Ala., Timothy A. Byrnes, Atlantic City, N. J., and William S. Davis, Little Rock, Ark. They arrived at the agency December 21, 1894, and began work, reciving a per diem of $6 each, together with actual and necessary traveling and incidental expenses while on duty, and were allowed a clerk.

On August 19, 1895, William S. Davis died. Up to September 14, 1895, the commission had spent $12,100 of the appropriation, and it was evident more money must be appropriated if the commission was to be kept in the field.

The Secretary relieved them February 4, 1896, and on the 13th they retired from the field, having spent one year, one month and twenty-four days in Utah, and, presumably, spent all of the $16,000 appropriated.

They accomplished what? Echo answers, what? The Utes reply, kutchi. The people of Utah know, and the aforesaid Secretary knows there was nothing done. The commission had reported that it was impossible to induce the Uncompahgres to take allotments and pay $1.25 an acre for them, because the Uintahs had not been required to pay for their lands.

The commission proved to be an exceptionally extravagant failure, but the Secretary of the Interior continued them in the field till the money was exhausted, and should have known from first to last they were accomplishing nothing.

A Commission That Did Allot.

A year and a half elapsed and another commission was appointed, and proceeded to Utah under instructions dated August 25, 1897. It was composed of James Jeffreys, Ross Guffin and Howell P. Myton. They held councils with the Indians, took them into their confidence, and entered upon their duties without opposition, and made eighty-three allotments on the Uncompahgre reservation and allotted 48,000 acres on the Uintah. The Uncompahgres paid the Uintahs and White Rivers $1.25 an acre for the 48,000 acres, or $60,000, and the Government paid them at the same time $10,000 for a strip cut from the east side of their reservation designated as mineral land.

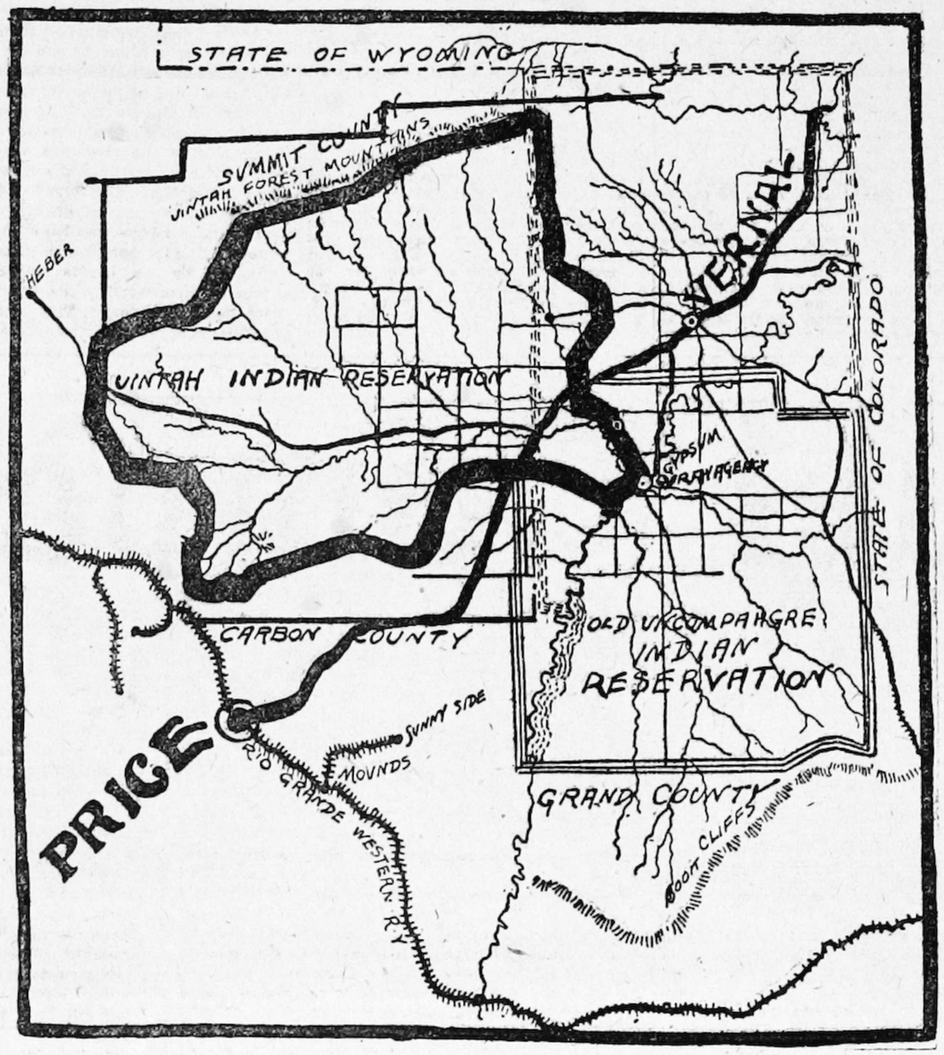
Howell P. Myton was appointed Indian agent at White Rocks while serving on the commission, and had the satisfaction of seeing the complete fulfillment of the agreement, and the payment of the $70,000 while agent.

Utes After Uncle Sam.

In passing, it would show lack of courage not to revert to an obligation of the Government to the confederated band of Utes. These Indians surrendered their reservation in Colorado which embraced almost one-fifth of the entire area of the State, on condition that they should be paid for the land as sold; and it is claimed there is now due them over $5,500,000 for lands disposed of.

Senator Teller offered a bill a year ago for their relief and to bring the matter to a final determination of their rights. Half a dozen attorneys have taken the case for the Indians at a compensation of not to exceed 15 per cent of the sum to be allowed the Indians. A fee of possibly $825,000 to be paid by poor, deserving claimants for the collection of a debt from a guardian. The amount due them should, in reason and justice, be arrived at by the Government through its paid officials, and promptly placed to their credit and disbursed as needed.

Is it not a reflection that our Government is so inefficient in its control and management of Indian affairs, that the very wards of the Nation are obliged to employ counsel to test their rights in the courts and thus recover money due them by absolute agreement, and about which there should be no controversy?



The Uintah Indian Reservation—Best Reached From Price, Utah.

The Uintah a Big Reservation.

Previous to the recent surveys the Uintah reservation contained 2,039,040 acres, but the true southern boundary is found to be several miles farther south, and this addition with others on the east and west will materially add to the original area. Deducting 250,000 acres south of the Strawberry, assigned to the Indians for range, then the 48,000 formerly allotted to the Uncompaghre and a possible 100,000 acres by the recent allotments, there would yet remain about 1,650,000 acres, estimating the additions by the late surveys.

More than 1,000,000 acres may be counted on as mountain, mineral and grazing lands; then a township of timber should be set aside for the Indians, and a few sections embracing the coal mine. The steam sawmill might be thrown in by way of encouraging the Utes to discard the old tepees and build frame houses with Queen Anne fronts and modern Mary Ann backs.

In all this intermountain region the water supply must be reckoned with, and it is no exaggeration to state that the Uintah reservation is the best watered district in all Utah. The streams are fed by perpetual snows away up on dizzy summits and in deep ravines, and flow to the plains with a fall of 100 feet to the mile, and at the foothills can be readily diverted to the higher levels.

Rivers, Lakes and Trout.

The Duchesne is the principal river and receives the waters of all the other streams in its course to Green river. The Uintah, Lake Fork, Rocky creek, White Rocks creek and also fine streams of clear water, all coming out of the mountain canyons of the Uintah and Wasatch.

Away up at surprising altitudes are beautiful lakes as exceptional and enchanting as any on the continent, and in the quiet waters of these lakes and the tumbling, dashing flow of the creeks are sporty trout waiting for a frolic with the white man's bait and hook.

Alfalfa, Grain and Fruit.

The Uintah basin has an elevation of 4500 to 6000 feet, and has somewhat shorter seasons than valleys farther south, yet all cereals and most vegetables are successfully grown, and the Ashley valley, twenty-five miles east, grows as fine apples and other fruits as are produced in the State.

It is presumed that where Indians grow crops with satisfactory results white men can, and the Utes have been raising wheat and oats and alfalfa hay for years on both the river bottoms and the uplands; the most extensive farming being done on the "bench" away above the river valley. These red men of the mountains are not thrifty farmers, but they sell thousands of dollars worth annually of their surplus oats, hay and straw to the military post near by—Fort Duchesne.

Asphaltum and Minerals

The extent and variety of the mineral deposits are undetermined, for the public is debarred from prospecting on an Indian reservation, but the greatest asphaltum beds in the world are in this extensive basin. The various hydrocarbons are known to be there on a colossal scale. Coal abounds, iron is assured, and when the prospector gets the privilege of delving here for the precious metals we may expect to see the short stretch of mountain between the reservation and the rich mines at Park City honey-combed through and through.

Railroads.

The survey of the Denver, Northwestern & Pacific, known as the Moffat road, is through the best part of the reservation, and the road is already completed from Denver into the mountains of Colorado. When this line is finished through it will afford the public the shortest time between Denver and Salt Lake City. A spur from Mack on the Rio Grande Western is now operated to Dragon, a point within forty-five miles of Ouray on Green river.

Hitherto the only accessible railroad point was at Price, Utah, 110 miles from the agency, and to and from that station all products and goods had to be transported by teams.

Reservation Opening.

It would be presumption to offer instruction to prospective settlers about the method and requirements in taking land at the opening, in advance of the President's proclamation. It is, however, Indian land and must be paid for at the rate of $1.25 per acre. Each homesteader will be entitled to 160 acres, and under existing law must prove continuous residence on the land selected fourteen months prior to making final proof. The race and rush for a dandy claim, and then contention and litigation have given way to the drawing method. Several places for registering are published, after the registration numbers are deposited in and drawn from a box, and then a week or ten days allowed for examination of the land. If you select no land you lose no rights, and can wait for life with Indians somewhere else, say in Alaska, but you will not find better Indian friends than the Utes of Utah.

The opening of this vast tract is of especial interest to the people of Utah, who know it best, and appeals to homeseekers elsewhere. The farmer and the stockman will seek it, the miner and lumberman; the trader and townbuilder. The prospector and speculator will be in the procession, and the conservative Indian will be so overcome by the transformation that he will repose in his wick-i-up and kindly let out his allotment to white men on the shares.

The Ute Salutation "Mike."

There is a population of 1100 Ute Indians on the reservation, composed of the three tribes, the Uintahs outnumbering the others, and they quite generally speak some English and wear citizens' clothes. It cannot be expected that they carry on a conversation in English without occasionally introducing a word of their own language, and settlers should meet them half way and acquire some Ute. It will be easy to understand that "mike" means "how do you do?" "mike wash," "how do you do, my friend?" "oah" is "yes"; "kutch" "no"; "kutch-i" "no good"; "monch" means "father" and "pee-ats" "mother"; "inepegunt" "you are crazy"; "te cuva sah-reets" "do you eat dog?"

The Indian is just coming out of his shell; don't expect too much of him. The world is much larger than he expected, and the white man more cunning than he ever imagined. He has seen the worst of our civilization and but little of the best, and has no desire to go to the white man's heaven. He cannot throw away his superstitions, legends, traditions and myths until he has found something really better. Be gentle with him.

A Land of Honey.

The Scriptures advise us of "A good land and large, a land flowing with milk and honey." Is Utah not referred to? Thirty-six Delawares could nestle within her boundaries, and there would be room left for a sun dance, a camp-meeting and an intermountain exposition all going at once.

Uintah county is the banner bee county in the State, and its honey pronounced by Chicago dealers the best in the world. The leading bee firm in the county produced in one season from 160 colonies 53,000 pounds of extracted honey, an average of 331 pounds for each colony.

The bees are as industrious as the Mormons and the Mormons as the bees, and the significant emblem of the Latter-day Saints is the bee-hive.

State Absorbs "Old Uintah."

The diversified industries of the State appeal to all seeking active industrial life in the West, and the great reclamation enterprise of the Government will encourage the investment of capital in Utah and in all the intermountain country. The addition of 2,000,000 acres to the productive capacity of Utah, paying their tribute in agriculture and stock; in gilsonite, elaterite and other hydrocarbons, and in rare and precious metals, will show very favorably in the statistical reports, and soon the old Uintah reservation with its undeveloped, multiplied resources, captured by a new and aggressive people, will be lost forever in the industrial, political, social, throbbing life of the great sovereign State.